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Memoirs of William Young · 1810

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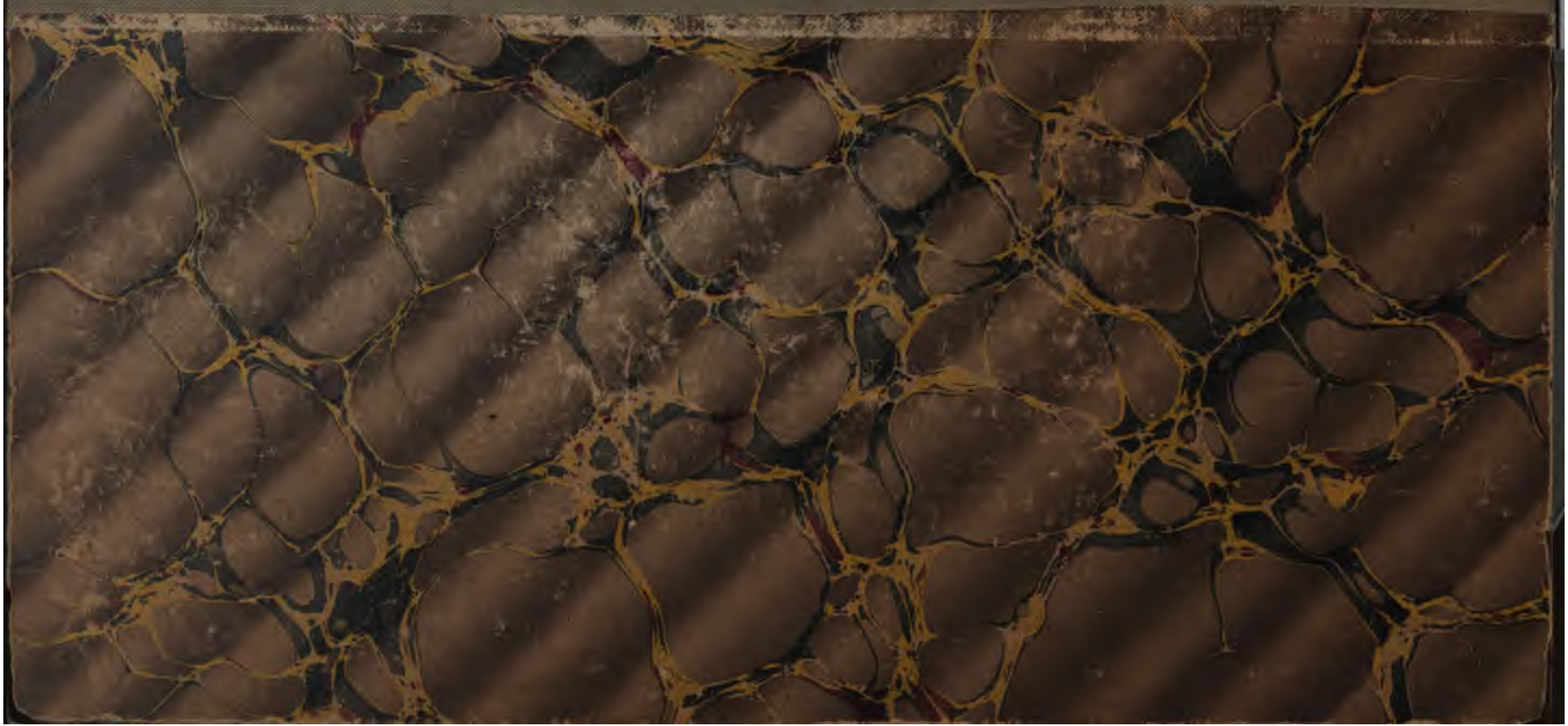

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MEMOIRS

OF

An Ancient Friend,

WILLIAM YOUNG,

LATE OF Leominster, DECEASED.

Thou makest the out-goings of the morning and evening to rejoice.—

PSALM lxvi. 8

LONDON:

PRINTED AND SOLD BY WILLIAM PHILLIPS,
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MEMOIRS, &c.

IN surveying the path of the just, which, according to Scripture, shines brighter and brighter unto the perfect day, there are two points which it is peculiarly interesting to contemplate with attention. In whatever way the great Captain of Salvation has been pleased to conduct the Christian traveller, his first entrance on the narrow path, and his exit to a state of unbounded enjoyment in the unveiled presence of his Redeemer, are circumstances which claim, with peculiar force, the attention of such as have the humble hope of pursuing the same holy high way. In a few words, these points seem to afford a view of the redemption of Jesus, so far as relates to one individual, begun and completed:—as it were, the appropriation, the personal application, of the benefit which he purchased for lost mankind by his blood. Now, though a great many particulars are not easily to be amassed, of the long life of William Young of Leominster, who died there the 31st of the Fifth month 1808, in his Ninetieth year; yet seeing he has left behind him an account of his early visitations and initiatory conflicts, and a surviving daughter has been careful to preserve a memorial of his closing days; the two mo-

mentous points already mentioned lie open to our view. If, from the scarcity of circumstances, which are recollected, of his intervening life, or from the comparatively small part which our deceased friend took in the more general concerns of our religious community, any reader should be tempted to think that his course was not answerable to the signal ardour with which he entered on it,—that the means seem over-proportioned to the end; let it be recollected that the end of Christian redemption is no less than eternal life; and that the omniscient Author of this infinite blessing, alone knows the degree and the kind of baptismal preparation, for securing it to his dependent children.

William Young, father of the subject of the present brief memoir, was son of Constantine Young, and grandson of that Peter Young of Leominster who is mentioned in the journal of George Fox, anno 1667. The family was therefore early in the profession of the Society of Friends. By his wife Mary, daughter of William and Mary Beck of Bromyard, he had three sons, who survived him, of whom this our late friend was the eldest. William and Mary Young both died in the year 1722, when their children were at a very tender age. The care of their education therefore devolved upon other relations; and that of William was superintended by his grandfather and grandmother Beck, with whom

he lived until their decease. The religious care of these kind relations, especially that of the grandmother, who survived her husband a few years, had a very beneficial effect on the mind of their young charge. Particularly, it was the means of raising in his susceptible mind, a strong aversion to falsehood, to profanity, and to the corrupt language of his school-fellows and associates in their play. He also, about this time, steadily withstood their attempts to persuade him to learn to play at cards. On the death of his grandmother, which occurred in the year 1731, when he was about Thirteen years old, he was received into the protection of his maternal uncle John Beck and of Ann his wife, also of Bromyard. These relations were remarkably kind and tender over him, and treated him as one of their own children; and he confessed himself to have had frequent occasion of remembering their care with gratitude, as that of Providence over a poor orphan.

About this time his uncle was desirous of sending him to a grammar school in the town, in order that he might learn the Latin language; but the tender-minded youth was so much afraid of being exposed to the bad example and influence of the scholars, whom he knew to be a rude, and even wicked company, that he prevailed on his kind relation to decline the measure. Thus he missed whatever advantage might

have arisen from some acquaintance with ancient literature; but he was sent to a boarding school in Worcester, to finish his education in writing and arithmetic. While at this schooi, says he, in a memorial he has left behind him, 'Although I was not at times without a sense of 'Almighty kindness, and had cries raised in my 'mind to Him; yet the seeds of fallen nature 'began conspicuously to appear in the love of 'dress.'

When he was about Fifteen years of age, a place of apprenticeship was provided for him in the trade of a glover at Worcester; but before the business was concluded, his aunt Beck died; and her afflicted husband determined himself to take for an apprentice, this their nephew; additionally recommended by having been an object of the particular esteem of his lost and beloved wife. John Beck, under whose care, during a very important time of life, William Young was thus placed, was a mercer at Bromyard; and, according to the account of his nephew and ward, a grave friend and a sensible man; but also one of a disposition rather too easy and indulgent: so that when the seeds of vanity, already hinted at, as having begun to spring up at Worcester, in the love of dress, acquired a still further growth, William could easily prevail on his uncle, master, and guardian, to allow him to gratify himself

in things which, he was in time induced to believe, had no better origin than pride. One instance of this he has thought fit to record; because, when the "administration of condemnation" afterwards took place in him, he felt it as a crime, and experienced no small remorse. It was then the custom even for young men and lads to wear wigs, and William did not cease importuning his uncle, until he had gained his consent, to have his hair cut off and to adopt the mode. To effect it, he made many pretences; but he owns that to be in the fashion, was the real motive. The motive, indeed, to action often determines the nature of the act; and the pious reader, who has made correct observations as he has been passing through social life, even religious social life, must often have had to deplore the want of care in the guardians of youth, in watching, and endeavouring to eradicate, the seeds of personal vanity. It is one of the more early snares by which the youthful mind is captivated, and led into the spirit of the world; and many a sore conflict has fallen to the lot of the awakened mind, which might have been spared, if the hand of experience and vigilance had been timely and steadily employed. This care is a debt of love to inexperienced youth; and the parent or guardian who daily endeavours to live sensible of his own want of heavenly protection, may generally discharge it in love.

The following is the account left by our deceased friend, very slightly corrected with respect to a few verbal inaccuracies:

'The nearer,' says our friend, 'I grew to 'manhood, the stronger were my propensities 'to follow the ways of the world, in which the 'evil nature so predominated. And although I 'was, through the secret preserving hand of 'kind Providence, kept from any thing account-'ed immoral; yet, about the Twentieth year of 'my age, I was deeply self-condemned for the 'vanity and levity of my mind; and also for 'my impurity of heart: contrary to what was 'required by the doctrine of our Lord and law-'giver. This so sensibly affected me, as, by 'degrees to sink my spirits into very deep 'distress: which I was sensible must be taken 'notice of by others in the family. When my 'uncle inquired the cause, I broke out, as one 'too full to contain any longer, with the de-'scription of my most unhappy situation; which 'admitted not, in my apprehension, of any 'hope, nor received the least relief from any 'thing my friends could administer. By ex-'treme grief and terror of mind, I was soon 'reduced to such weakness, that I could scarcely 'stand on my feet; and it seemed unlikely 'I should live many days. My relations failed 'not to call in medical assistance; but, alas, 'the nature of the disorder was far out of

'the reach of medicine; although it might have
'some tendency of good to the body. But nei-
'ther that, nor any thing that could be said or
'done by mortals, could in any degree remove
'the malady. It was so deeply rooted by the
'painful convictions of the corruptions of na-
'ture, without a sense of any means that could
'overcome or purify it, that all the arguments
'attempted for my consolation, which were
'many, had no such effect: but I was permitted
'to continue under the most dreadful apprehen-
'sions of being doomed to everlasting misery,
'until I was brought into despair; which seemed
'to increase even after my bodily strength was
'in degree restored. The food I took appeared
'to me not to yield its usual nourishment; nor
'the sleep I got to afford any refreshment. I
'was rendered a dismal object, and could not
'bear the thoughts of seeing, or conversing
'with any of my acquaintance, but such as lived
'in the family. My ideas were so engaged in my
'sad state, I thought I could not forbear giv-
'ing others a detail thereof. I therefore kept
'as much alone as possible, creeping into pri-
'vate parts of the house, or back buildings, as
'one destitute of every comfort, not esteeming
'myself fit to be seen, or to converse with hu-
'man beings, and fully persuaded it never
'would be better, but continually grow worse;

'This, my deplorable condition continued near 'nine months.

'However, infinite Wisdom and Mercy inter- 'posed for my deliverance, in a very unexpect- 'ed time and manner. One day, as I was in my 'lonely retreat from the family, a secret con- 'viction or reproof appeared in my mind against 'an evil thought or instigation, accompanied 'with as clear and intelligible information, as if 'I had heard a voice saying, *This is the light of 'Christ, which thou hast often read of, and heard 'of in the testimonies of Friends; but never 'well understood, or properly attended to.* This, 'though the appearance of any good towards 'me seemed very small, the depth of my mi- 'sery induced me to turn to; and I was thereby 'led into a solid retirement of mind. And by 'waiting in secret, from time to time, my faith 'was so strengthened in the appearance of the 'Divine life, which is the true light of men, 'that cries and breathings arose in me to the Fa- 'ther of spirits, the God of all consolation, who 'evidently appeared for my help; opening the 'springs of everlasting peace, and kindness. 'Oh, the joy of this day was inexpressible! I 'found answers of love returned, and what I 'asked for, by the motions thereof, readily 'granted; and such contrition and repentance 'wrought, as was never to be repented of.' I

'was in a little time so wonderfully relieved,
'as to feel myself, and I believe appear to
'others, like another man. The peace and sa-
'tisfaction I enjoyed, after this long series of
'woe and distress, made me think myself as
'one in paradise. Indeed it was greater than I
'believe any, who have not experienced the
'value of such a deliverance, can comprehend:
'for I was made sensible, by the operation on my
'spirit of the light and life of Christ, in whom are
'hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge,
'that He is indeed the true Saviour, to whom all
'power is given to subdue sin; and that there is
'no other way of obtaining everlasting salva-
'tion, but by his powerful regenerating Spirit,
'working in us.

'This visitation of Divine love manifestly ap-
'peared to have been extended through the
'compassionate regard of the almighty Creator
'to the unworthy workmanship of his hand:
'thus bringing me to a true sense of that de-
'pendance I ought to have on him; and dili-
'gent care to watch, and wait for the renewal of
'light and wisdom to worship and serve him;
'that I might thereby fill up my station in so-
'ciety well pleasing in his sight. After, there-
'fore, enjoying a few weeks in delightful re-
'tirement, wherein I had been favoured with the
'aboundings of that Divine sweetness, which
'had made such good impressions on my mind, I

'found it my place to venture abroad once more
'on a First-day, to attend our meetings for wor-
'ship. I had much solid comfort in them, and
'was thereby encouraged to apply myself to
'my usual occupations in business; and not
'only to be diligent, but to serve beyond the
'term of my indenture, to make up for the time
'lost by the aforesaid indisposition.

'Soon after entering into my usual employ-
'ment, I became uneasy at our being in the
'common method of calling the names of the
'months, and writing them in the shop-books,
'instead of those adopted by Friends. Loth to
'take up such a cross, without being satisfied it
'was a required duty, as I was one day thought-
'ful about it, having a bible in my hand, on
'opening it, the thirteenth verse of the twenty-
'third chapter of Exodus immediately present-
'ed itself to my view. "And in all things that
"I have said unto you, be ye circumspect; and
"make no mention of the names of other gods,
"neither let it be heard out of thy mouth." This
'struck my attention, and fixed my judgment.
'From that time to this (fifty-four years), I have
'had no unity with the practice; but have been
'sorry that any of our friends should fall into it;
'especially such as keep to the propriety of
'speech respecting the single language; as the
'deviation in both cases are relicks, or marks,
'of the apostacy from primitive Christianity.'

William Young, the father of the subject of this account, had been a tradesman at Leominster: After his early decease, as has been mentioned, he was succeeded in business by a relation, who, having purchased the stock in trade, became a debtor to his family for the amount. About the time of the expiration of the apprenticeship of William Young the son, this relation became insolvent; and William, with a view the better to secure to his family the property engaged in this concern, assumed the business, and undertook, by proper instalments, to pay all the creditors; which, with the assistance of one of his brothers, he performed. By this means he settled himself in his native town of Leominster; and in the year 1748 he married Hannah, daughter of Henry Payton of Dudley, Worcestershire, who proved, to use his own words, a true friend, and sympathising, engaging partner. They lived together about thirteen years, but, in 1761, she was taken from him by a fever. He felt her loss as a very close trial; and describes the parting stroke as more than his nature seemed capable to support, had it not been assisted by the same invisible Power, which had delivered him from the agonizing conflict of his youthful days: 'the remembrance of which,' says he, 'and His 'present help in times of trouble, have been a 'great means of establishing my confidence in 'the Almighty hand: to whom no trials we can

'meet with, no afflictions which can befal us, 'are too hard to be overcome.'

It has been already hinted, that not many particulars are recorded of the life of this friend. He was for a long series of years a steady exemplary character, both as an inhabitant of his native town, and as a member of our religious Society. About the Fifty-fourth year of his age, he came forth as a minister in his own meeting at Leominster. Not long after he had resigned himself to this public service, he was again visited with a heavy domestic affliction, in the decease of his only son, an amiable youth in his Nineteenth year. On this occasion, he was enabled to bear his loss with much resignation to the Divine will; and at the burial of the remains of his beloved son, he addressed, in the line of his ministry, the numerous congregation assembled to attend it, and especially the younger part of it, in a very affecting manner, though with but a few words.

In the service of the ministry, though he did not travel much as a principal, he frequently found himself engaged to accompany travelling ministers whose duty led them into his neighbourhood; and particularly, he several times attended upon such messengers through various parts of Wales, a district bordering upon Herefordshire, and in which not many friends reside.

He was a diligent attender of his own, and

adjacent meetings for discipline; and, while of ability to travel, was a frequent attender of the Yearly Meeting. He was sometimes engaged with other friends, by appointment of the Yearly Meeting, in visiting monthly and quarterly meetings; and it was on a visit of this kind in Cornwall, that he received the affecting information of the illness of his wife; who departed before he could reach home. He was also on similar service in Wales, and in the Eastern counties. For more than twenty years before his decease, he had retired from trade.

About the Seventh month 1806, his health declined, he became feeble and languid, and his rest was disturbed. He seemed surprized that his daughter should expect or even hope that he should recruit. He observed that he had lived to a more advanced age than he had ever expected, or than he recollected any of his family to have done. He said that it could not be expected that he could continue long, but that all would be well; that he felt no condemnation, but was quite easy to go, whenever it was his Maker's will; and that he desired to leave all to his ordering.

The 27th of this month he was at meeting, where he exhorted Friends to be very diligent in endeavouring to obtain Divine assistance to wait upon God, and worship him aright: which advice was delivered in much bodily weakness,

and tenderness of spirit. Though his communication was consoling to others, yet he was much exhausted on his return from the meeting; and adverted to it as a convincing proof that he was not likely to remain long with his daughter, whose tender care of him he acknowledged; expressing his hope that she would be rewarded, and his wish that she would give him up freely.

He continued very much enfeebled for several days, and in a few days after he was thus enabled to admonish his beloved friends, he said of himself that Death did not appear to have any sting for him; and that he believed he should go to a good God; who is merciful, just, and kind.

Thus he continued gradually to decline until the end of the Sixth month 1807, when he was seized with great pain; and when relieved from the more violent symptoms, he was at times very restless; but appeared to be free from anxiety of mind. Once when in pain he exclaimed, but with calmness, 'O gracious God Almighty, be 'pleased to remember me;' and he repeatedly declared that his whole trust was in the Lord his Saviour. About a week after this seizure, and after a very restless night, early one morning he apprehended his end to be approaching, and said to his daughter, 'My dear child, do thou give 'my dear love to all my friends; but my very 'dear love to thy dear sister, brother, and the

'children; and tell them I die in full expec-
'tation and assurance of the salvation of my
'God (or Saviour). My faith does not fail.
'In Him is all my trust and dependance.' Again,
'Oh, what a happy thing it is to die, and to go
'to so good a God!' He then again desired his love to all friends, and said that the whole world were his friends; that he loved every one of God's creation; that the good, who trusted in God, would be eternally happy; and that God would not leave her, whom he was then addressing. At many different times he was heard to exclaim 'O, most gracious God!' 'God 'is a God of power!'

Having expressed the desire which he had long felt that his death might be in the Lord's time, and once finding himself somewhat revived, he appeared to think it strange; but he said, 'If 'the Lord continues me for any purpose of his 'own glory, so be it. It is well.' He desired the Lord's will might be done; and repeated those words of the Lord's prayer "Thy king-"dom come, Thy will be done:" and said that death, or the time of it, was at the Lord's choice. Being requested to take some nourishment, he replied, 'I don't know. I desire to be in 'peace.' His daughter saying, 'My dear fa-'ther, thou art in peace;' he answered, 'Our 'Saviour said, "My peace I leave with you. "My peace I give unto you. Not as the "world giveth, give I." 'This peace,' said he,

'is far beyond all the world can give.' The same day, he said, 'Be comforted, my dear 'daughter: I desire thou may'st. It may be a 'satisfaction to thee as long as thou livest, to find 'thy father favoured in his death. His other daughter lived in Cornwall, and she who was his constant attendant was remarking to him, that it would be a trouble to her sister to be so absent from him, when he replied, 'Oh dear! 'it will be cause of rejoicing to her, and all my 'relations, if they believe that I die well. If 'you keep your places, you will not want sa-'tisfaction. Our Lord told his disciples, all 'power was given to him, in heaven and in 'earth; and he, who is so merciful and good, 'died for sinners, that all who trust in him, and 'repent of any thing done amiss, shall be saved. 'He is our advocate. I should be glad some of 'our friends were here, to know that death 'seems not a king of terrors. The sting of 'death is taken away; and I hope I shall soon 'be received into glorious mansions, to sing the 'song of praise to Him who is worthy of all ho-'nour and praise for ever.'

But, notwithstanding the clear prospect of approaching bliss, which was allowed to this our beloved friend, he had still many months more to partake of the weakness of the body; and to remain an example of Christian patience. One morning in the Eighth month, his medical attendant, calling to see him, inquired how he

did, and expressed a pleasure in finding that he had passed the night so well; but William, still keeping his eye on the recompense of reward, replied that he was very poorly, and believed he should soon be in everlasting rest, where there was no need of doctors. His daughter soon after enquired if he found himself worse; on which, after again testifying his sense of her tenderness and affection, he said that he thought he was fas approaching to his end; desired his dear love to all his dear friends, and his love to all that had any regard for him or knew him; and he added, 'Tell them that my sole dependance for 'salvation, is on the Lord Jesus Christ, who gave 'himself for us, that he might redeem us from 'all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar 'people, zealous of good works: and I wish that 'all may be zealous of good works, and avoid 'all sin, or any thing that offends their great 'Creator;' soon after further adding, 'The end 'crowns all.'

For two months before this he had appeared to suffer little pain, but was often restless. At other times he was very quiet and comfortable, and his faculties in the day-time were clear; though during the night they were often confused. His appetite for food was sufficient; but still the powers of body and mind were gradually declining; and he seemed to be in an innocent, sweet, child-like state. Thus he remained

until the 27th of the Fifth month 1808, when he had a paralytic stroke. A short time before this, on hearing read the fourteenth chapter of John, he remarked that there were many comfortable things in that chapter; and that he hoped, or believed that he had a share in those things. This is indeed a portion of scripture rich in consolation; which its exordium imports and premises. "Let not your heart be troubled. Ye "believe in God. Believe also in me." After the stroke he scarcely spoke intelligibly, or could take much nourishment; but passed much of his short supervening time in slumber, and apparently not in much pain, till early in the morning of the 31st, when he finished his course of near ninety years. His affectionate daughter, and constant attendant, concludes her narrative of his closing days, with observing that a sweet influence was sensibly perceived, as he quitted the shackles of mortality.

FINIS.

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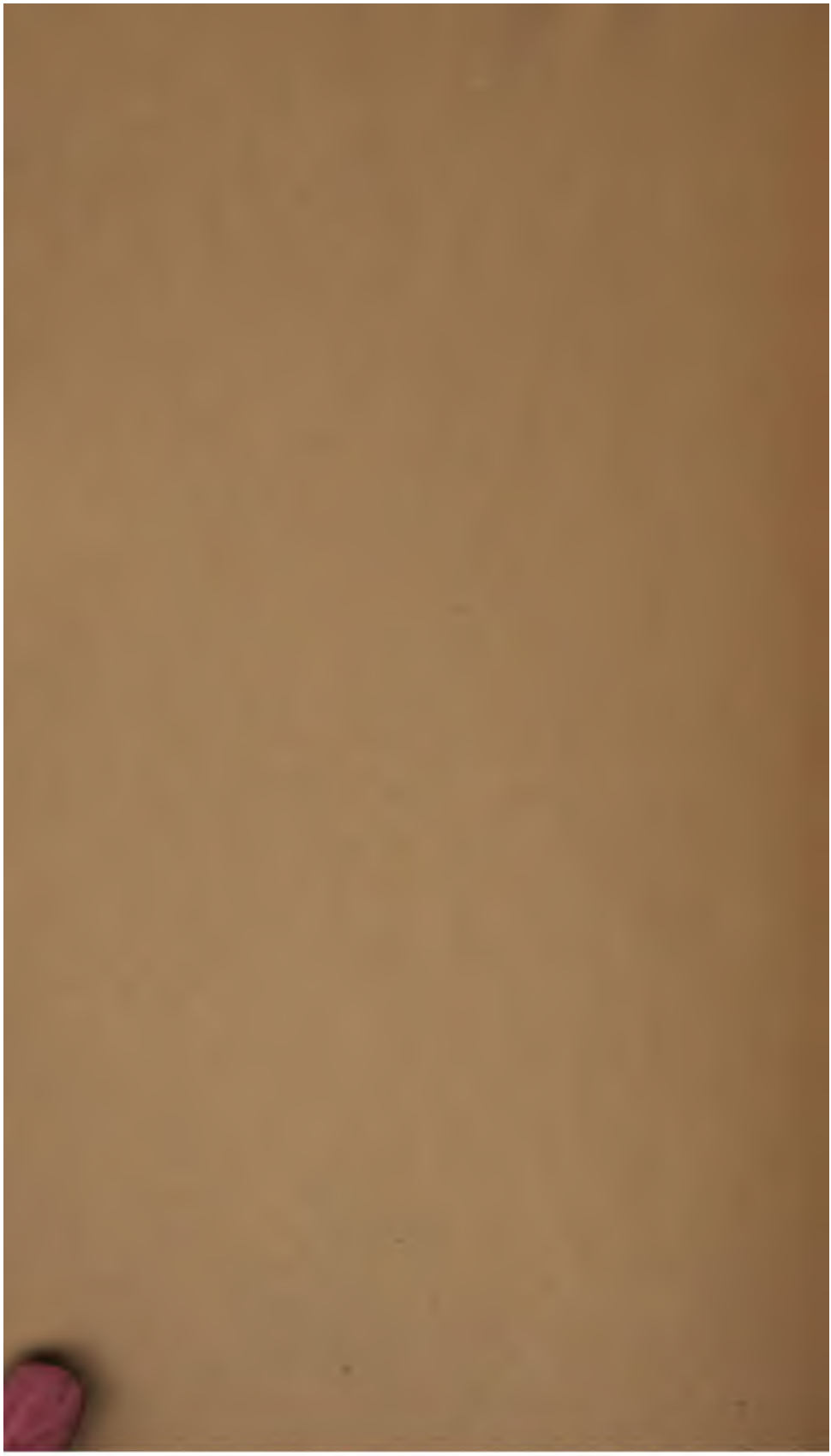

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